4. Treason

628 602 Treachery and treason between relatives by marriage were not unusual. The proverb says bomóng'ósulu nd'ókilo, "treason exists [294] chiefly on the part of relative by marriage." Not that this happened through any fundamental maliciousness apart from perhaps some rare exception. But in case of a war or particularly of a vendetta, relative by marriage did not hesitate to betray his in-law and thus send him to his death.

We shall limit ourselves to giving two case histories which are well known to the current generation. (1)

1. I do not know exactly when these events occurred. In any case they date back to the time of the Independent State and to the beginning of the occupation.

At the time when the Ingende post was occupied by the white "Itumbambile" and that of Ikengé by "Bosénja," some men from [266] Boala (Ikakema y'óselo, Bombwanja) surprised an inhabitant of Bokuku (Wangata), killed him, and ate him. Shortly thereafter Lokwa jw'óyelé, a man from Boala, went to visit his sister Eúmé, who was married to Imbilé is'éy'osola of Ikonja. It happened that the latter was a maternal uncle of the victim of the Boala men. Was Lokwa unaware of this relationship? Or did he trust his brother-in-law? Whatever the case he was well received. Nevertheless, Imbilé had not forgotten his nephew's assassination and went to inform his close kin of this good opportunity to avenge the murder. One evening they broke into the hut that had been placed at the visitor's disposal and found him there with his sister Eúmé and his wife Lompoko. The [246] two women managed to escape, but Lokwa was taken, killed, and eaten. Naturally, his sister Eúmé did not return to her husband, and there was no question of a restitution of the bride price.

The second case dates from the same period. Two Batswa of [266] Mbalanga (Etóontale, Bongili), Bokengo and Bolayengé, surprised Mboko Ilomba of Boala in the forest, killed him, and ate him.

628 602 Some time thereafter, a man named Bengŏngŏ from the Ndongŏ village of the Bongíli went to Bosíla to visit his sister Bosíka, who was married to Eale ĕ Bofekĕ. The latter told him that the village was enraged because of the assassination of one of their people by the Batswa of the Bongíli. He advised him to go [295] and hide in the fallow ground lest excited men come upon him and revenge themselves on him. He led his brother-in-law there himself. Therefore he knew the exact location of his hiding place and ran to betray him to the others. They encircled the fallow ground and easily found [266] poor Bengŏngŏ, who was pitilessly massacred and eaten. His sister Bosíka never knew of her husband's treachery; she thought that despite all his precautions, the other inhabitants had discovered her brother's hiding place. (1)

[649] 1. We should not be too astonished that during that period the Europeans did not intervene in these wars, vendettas, massacres, and acts of cannibalism. They let the natives do as they pleased among themselves and demanded only that they leave them alone and render them services and tribute. They had other things to do in those times. The white men Ămbá and Baisănkoi, of whom the natives still speak with respectful fear, were the first to begin punishing acts of barbarism in this region.

602 This hypocrisy on the part of the husband toward his wife and brother-in-law is due to the presence of two opposing feelings within him -- on the one hand, the love of his family and the feeling of solidarity which engenders hate and the desire for vengeance; on the other, love for his spouse. As these feelings are in complete contradiction with each other, he cannot reconcile them. But at least he can preserve appearances.

[539] This situation is referred to in the following proverb: bokilŏ ákwĭsáká, wĕngoyak'eyalo, "if your bokilŏ has hidden you, change

602 shelters." There is another, which is cruder: bokilɔ́ tɔ̂tswe nkɛ́lɛ́:
539 bafumba bɛ́leke mbá, emí ɛ́kolɛ́ké wɛ̌, "relative by marriage, let us go to the palm grove; the bafumba ants (Dorylus wilverthii) eat palm nuts; I will eat you." The following saying, applied to someone who is always trying to clear himself, is a more or less involuntary accusation: mpɔ́l ɔ̂kilɔ́, ntúfa é mpɔ́ngɔ; mpɔ́ngɔ y'ɔ̂kilɔ́ nsako ngá mbwá, "I do not eat my relative by marriage; on the contrary, I dip (food) in his fat; an in-law's fat is as tasty as a dog's." [296]

Nevertheless, a man never goes so far as to cause the death
602 of his sister's daughter's or other relative's husband. Or, as the
628 Nkundɔ́ say, one does not kill a person by whom one has been enriched. What is the reason for this distinction? According to our people it is the affection they feel toward their sister, daughter, etc.; they love them too much to pain them by taking away their husbands.

This treacherous and barbarous conduct is therefore directed by the bokilɔ́ toward the bokanga, that is, by those who have paid the bride price to those who have received it, but never the reverse.

Appendix

000 This appendix pertains to each of the three preceding articles. Therefore it may reasonably be placed here. It does not deal with any special law nor with a custom that is legal, universal, or common. It is concerned with isolated cases. But it seems to me that the few lines to follow are not without interest, since they give a good indication of the mentality that may be found among these people.

602 It may happen that a woman has a complaint or feels she has
578 cause to be dissatisfied with one of her relatives, for example her brother. In her opinion he may not be sufficiently kind and generous toward her, or he may treat her in a manner she considers unfair. In a moment of anger she reveals her feelings to her husband and incites him to avenge her by injuring or even killing the one who has offended her.

That is what happened several decades ago to Bosela w'ɔ̂mpwengé of Bolénge (Bongíli) (who died in 1932, a very old man). His wife Ilumbé was very dissatisfied in that her brother did not give

586* 577 continuous state of enmity existed between his clan and the husband's, or if the husband owed him a substantial debt, one that clearly equaled the woman's bride price. In the first case a new war followed almost inevitably. Later on the woman's family contacted the new son-in-law. The gifts they brought were considered the dowry, and he began to pay the bride price. But there was no question of reimbursing the bride price to the first husband; relations between him and the woman's clan were completely broken. The difference between this situation and the standard procedure described above lies precisely in the fact that there is no restitution. In the case of a debt there was no restitution either. The woman's flight constituted a compensation (lowáála) and was therefore so designated (N. aókenda ndá lowáála). If the husband lodged a complaint, the judges sent him a piece of bofofó (1) to let him know that they did

[202] [628] 1. The bofofó is a piece of dried banana leaf which has been rolled up and tied with two knots (or more, as the case required). To indicate the end of a palaver, the bofofó is cut in two (or more) pieces, with a knot in each piece. One piece is sent to each interested party.

not want to concern themselves with his case, which he himself knew to have very poor grounds. Even the members of his own clan prevented him from making war; they knew perfectly well that the wrong was entirely on their relative's side.

The practice of taking refuge that we have just described was simply known as bejwó, bómoto áótswá bejwó, because that word was the principal one in the ultimatum.

178 586* 577 As we have said above, the custom here described disappeared with colonization. Even though the scope of this study does not extend to the Nkundó who are settled north of the Tshuapa, it [393] may be of interest to note that an evolution of this custom is taking shape in the Losanganya region. If a woman is condemned for leaving the conjugal household and imprisoned, she asks someone to marry her -- if the opportunity presents itself. If the man accepts